

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 1414

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR EMIN GL DA

SUBJ: ELECTIONS IN GREELAND STRENGTHEN HOME-RULE
MOVEMENT

SUMMARY: THE APRIL 10 ELECTIONS FOR THE GREENLAND
NATIONAL COUNCIL REVEALED A STRENGTHENING OF THE
OPPOSITION GROUP WHICH FAVORS INCREASED AUTONOMY FROM
DENMARK. ALTHOUGH THE MODERATE INCUMBENT, LARS
CHEMNITZ, RETAINED HIS POST AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL,
HE DID SO BY A RAZOR-THIN 9-TO-8 VOTE OVER THE OPPOSI-
TION CANDIDATE, JONATHAN MOTZFELDT. CONCESSIONS TO
THE HOME-RULE OPPOSITION WILL BE NECESSARY DURING THE
FORTHCOMING FOUR-YEAR TERM, BUT MINERAL AND OTHER
UNDERGROUND RESOURCES WILL REMAIN UNDER DANISH CONTROL.

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END SUMMARY.

1) ELECTIONS IN GREENLAND APRIL 10 FOR THE SEVENTEEN-MEMBER GREENLAND NATIONAL COUNCIL RESULTED IN A STRENGTHENED REPRESENTATION BY THE GROUP OF YOUNG RADICALS LED BY LARS EMIL JOHANSEN, MOSES OLSEN AND JONATHAN MOTZFELDT. THE POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL WAS REVEALED ON MAY 2 WHEN NEW OFFICERS WERE ELECTED AT THE CONVENING OF THE COUNCIL'S SPRING SESSION. THE INCUMBENT COUNCIL CHAIRMAN, LARS CHEMNITZ, WHO IS STRONGLY PRO-DANISH AND WHO REPRESENTS GODTHAAB DISTRICT, THE MOST HEAVILY DANISH DISTRICT IN GREENLAND, WAS RE-ELECTED BY THE NARROW MARGIN OF 9 TO 8. (FOLLOWING THE 1971 ELECTION, CHEMNITZ WAS ELECTED BY A 9-TO-6 MARGIN.) MOTZFELDT WAS THEREAFTER ELECTED VICE-CHAIRMAN. ANOTHER OF THE OPPOSITION LEADERS, MOSES OLSEN, WAS DEFEATED BY A MARGIN OF ONLY 125 VOTES IN HOLSTEINSBORG. HAD HE BEEN ELECTED, THE YOUNG RADICALS WOULD HAVE HAD A MAJORITY ON THE COUNCIL.

2) THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE YOUNG RADICAL OPPOSITION IS NOT YET CLEARLY DEFINED. THE MOST ANTI-DANISH AND LEFTIST LEADER OF THE GROUP, LARS EMIL JOHANSEN, HAS BEEN ONE OF THE TWO GREENLANDIC MEMBERS IN THE DANISH FOLKETING SINCE 1973, ALIGNING HIMSELF THERE WITH THE SOCIALIST PEOPLES PARTY. IN HIS MAIDEN SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT EARLY IN 1974, JOHANSEN DECLARED THAT ANTI-PATHY IN DANISH RULE WAS GROWING IN GREENLAND; THAT "NO OPPRESSED PEOPLE LOVE THEIR OPPRESSORS; AND THAT DENMARK SHOULD FEEL NO ASSURANCE THAT THE NEXT GENERATION OF GREENLANDERS WOULD ACCEPT THE EXISTING RELATIONSHIP AS PEACEFULLY AS HAVE THE PRESENT GENERATION.

3) THE OPPOSITION GROUP IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GREENLANDIC TRADE UNION FEDERATION (GAS), WHOSE CHAIRMAN ODAK OLSEN WAS ELECTED TO THE COUNCIL. THIS GROUP REFLECTS THE GENERATION GAP IN GREENLAND, REPRESENTING A POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE OLDER APOLITICAL "COMMUNITY LEADER" ESTABLISHMENT. BASICALLY THE GROUP STANDS FOR A NATIONALISTIC, HOME-RULE MOVEMENT MORE THAN A SOCIALIST ONE. IT OPPOSES EC MEMBERSHIP FOR GREENLAND AND STRONGLY OPPOSED THE RECENT ISSUANCE OF OIL EXPLORATION CONCESSIONS ON

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GREENLAND'S CONTINENTAL SHELF.

4) THE REPORT OF THE HOME RULE COMMISSION, APPOINTED BY THE DANISH MINISTRY FOR GREENLAND IN 1973, WAS SUBMITTED TO THE PRESENT MINISTER, JORGEN PEDER HANSEN, ON FEBRUARY 18. IT PROPOSES A NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GREENLAND AND DENMARK VERY SIMILAR TO THAT NOW PREVAILING BETWEEN DENMARK AND THE FAEROE ISLANDS. CERTAIN AREAS - SOCIAL

WELFARE, EDUCATION, THE MEDIA, AND LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL MATTERS-WOULD BE UNDER THE SOLE CONTROL OF GREENLANDERS, WHILE OTHER AREAS-DEFENSE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE COURTS, ETC.-WOULD BE "JOINT MATTERS" (MEANING MATTERS FUNDAMENTALLY RESERVED FOR DANISH CONTROL). THE REPORT ALSO SUGGESTED THAT CONTROL OF UNDERGROUND RESOURCES, INCLUDING EVENTUAL OIL DEPOSITS ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF, SHOULD BE EXERCISED BY THE GREENLAND NATIONAL COUNCIL-MAJOR DEMAND OF THE YOUNG RADICALS. THE LATTER, HOWEVER, IS "PROBABLY THE LAST AREA THE DANISH AUTHORITIES WILL RELINQUISH" ACCORDING TO ERIK HESSELBJERG, PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY IN THE GREENLAND MINISTRY. THE DANISH GOVERNMENT PROVIDES AN ANNUAL SUBSIDY OF APPROXIMATELY 800 MILLION KRONER TO GREENLAND AND IT EXPECTS THAT EVENTUAL OIL REVENUES WILL OFFSET THIS FIGURE IN THE FUTURE. WHILE WILLING TO GIVE THE GREENLAND COUNCIL ITS "FAIR SHARE" OF THESE REVENUES, THE DANISH GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER THEM.

5) THE PRESERVATION OF A NARROW TRADITIONALIST MAJORITY IN THE COUNCIL WAS A GREAT RELIEF TO THE DANISH AUTHORITIES; IT ASSURES ANOTHER FOUR YEARS OF MODERATE, COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN GREENLAND-DANISH RELATIONS AT THE OFFICIAL LEVEL. THE INCREASED STRENGTH OF THE RADICAL OPPOSITION IN GREENLAND (WHICH CLAIMS TO HAVE RECEIVED 53 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL GREENLAND VOTE IN THE JANUARY 9 DANISH FOLKETING ELECTIONS). WILL HOWEVER, REQUIRE SUBSTANTIAL MOVEMENT TOWARD HOME RULE IN THE COMING PERIOD. MINISTER FOR GREENLAND, HANSEN, IS PRESENTLY IN GODTHAAB DISCUSSING WITH THE COUNCIL THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HOME RULE COMMISSION'S REPORT.
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